Influence of Sanatan Dharma's on Social Structure: An Empirical and Textual Study

(With special reference to Ranchi and Deoghar District)

2025

A D.Litt. Synopsis submitted to University Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Ranchi University, Ranchi

Dr. Paras Kumar Choudhary
Associate Professor and Head
University Department of Sociology
Ranchi University, Ranchi

Dr. Sanjay Kumar
(Research Scholar)
University Department of Sociology
Ranchi University, Ranchi

Influence of Sanatan Dharma's on Social Structure: An Empirical and Textual Study (With special reference to Ranchi and Deoghar District)

I. State of the Art

Sanatan Dharm, often referred to as the "eternal order," represents a profound and timeless system of values, beliefs, and practices that have significantly influenced the cultural and social fabric of Indian society. Rooted in ancient scriptures like the Vedas, Bhagwat Geeta, Upanishads, Smritis, and Puranas, its principles emphasize harmony, duty, and interconnectedness, shaping not only individual lives but also societal structures. Across centuries, Sanatan Dharm has served as a foundation for defining caste hierarchies, gender roles, family systems, and rituals, thus influencing the very essence of social organization. Despite its universality, the manifestations of Sanatan Dharm vary across regions, shaped by localized cultural, economic, and demographic contexts. Ranchi and Deoghar districts of Jharkhand represent distinct yet interconnected landscapes where the influence of Sanatan Dharm can be observed in unique ways. Ranchi, with its rich tribal diversity and coexistence of traditional and modern elements, presents a dynamic interplay between tribal customs and dharmic practices. Deoghar, on the other hand, stands as a spiritual hub, deeply rooted in Brahminical traditions, exemplified by the renowned Baidyanath Dham temple. The convergence of these influences in these districts offers a fascinating perspective on how Sanatan Dharm interacts with local traditions, social structures, and evolving modern realities.

While the philosophical and historical dimensions of Sanatan Dharm have been widely studied, there remains a significant gap in understanding its localized impact on social structures, particularly in regions like Ranchi and Deoghar. Most existing research focuses on macro-level analyses or theoretical constructs, often failing to capture the lived realities and nuanced adaptations of dharmic principles in specific contexts. Present study aims to fill this gap by combining a critical examination of textual sources with empirical data collected through fieldwork in these districts. By exploring the intersection of Sanatan Dharm with tribal traditions, rural practices, and contemporary socio-

economic challenges, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of its role in shaping the social fabric of Ranchi and Deoghar.

Definition and Meaning: Sanatan Dharma

Sanatan Dharma, often referred to as the "eternal religion" or "eternal path," is the foundational spiritual and philosophical tradition of India. The term "Sanatan" means eternal, while "Dharma" signifies duty, righteousness, moral law, and the cosmic order (Michaels Axel, 2024). Together, they encapsulate a timeless way of life rooted in spiritual principles that transcend individual beliefs and practices. Sanatan Dharma is not confined to a single scripture, prophet, or set of dogmas but encompasses a wide array of sacred texts, rituals, and philosophies, making it an inclusive and evolving tradition. It emphasizes harmony with nature, ethical living, self-realization, and the pursuit of universal truth, serving as both a spiritual guide and a societal framework.

Historical Background: Sanatan Dharma

The origins of Sanatan Dharma are deeply intertwined with the historical and cultural development of Indian civilization. Its roots can be traced to the Indus Valley Civilization, where early forms of ritualistic practices and spirituality are evident. With the advent of the Vedic period, the tradition gained a structured expression through the compilation of the Vedas, the earliest known religious texts (Singh Manoj 2021). Over millennia, Sanatan Dharma evolved through interactions with various cultures, philosophical debates, and the contributions of sages and scholars. Unlike other religious systems, it was not founded at a specific moment but gradually emerged as a synthesis of diverse ideas, embodying the collective wisdom of ancient Indian society.

Vedic Period: Overview of Vedic Literature

The Vedic period is considered the cornerstone of Sanatan Dharma, marked by the composition of the Vedas, which are regarded as the oldest and most authoritative scriptures. The four Vedas-Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda serve as the primary source of spiritual knowledge,

encompassing hymns, rituals, and philosophical teachings. The Upanishads, often called Vedanta, represent the philosophical culmination of the Vedas, exploring profound metaphysical concepts such as the nature of Brahman (ultimate reality) and Atman (self). Other sacred texts like the Bhagavad Gita synthesize Vedic wisdom, offering guidance on ethical living, devotion, and selfless action. These texts collectively form the foundation of Sanatan Sanskriti, providing insights into the nature of existence and the path to spiritual liberation.

Social and Cultural Practices: Vedic Period

During the Vedic period, societal norms and cultural practices were deeply aligned with the principles of Sanatan Dharma. The varna system organized society into four classes- Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras each with specific roles and responsibilities designed to maintain social harmony and dharma (righteousness). Rituals and yajnas (sacrifices) formed an integral part of life, symbolizing the interconnectedness of individuals with cosmic forces (Tawakley N K, 2018). Festivals, seasonal rituals, and community gatherings played a crucial role in reinforcing societal values and transmitting spiritual knowledge. Family life was centered on dharma, with a strong emphasis on education, ethical living, and the performance of duties. These practices reflected the holistic worldview of Sanatan Dharma, where spirituality, culture, and societal organization were seamlessly integrated.

Post-Vedic Developments:

The post-Vedic era witnessed the emergence of various philosophical schools that expanded and diversified the intellectual and spiritual horizons of Sanatan Dharma. Advaita Vedanta, established by Adi Shankaracharya, emphasized non-duality, teaching that the individual self (Atman) is identical to the ultimate reality (Brahman). The Samkhya school introduced a dualistic framework, distinguishing between Purusha (consciousness) and Prakriti (matter). Yoga, as systematized by Patanjali, provided practical methods for achieving spiritual liberation through self-discipline, meditation, and ethical living. Other schools like Nyaya (logic) and Mimamsa (ritual exegesis) further enriched the tradition, addressing diverse aspects of human existence and

spiritual inquiry. These schools demonstrated the intellectual depth of Sanatan Dharma, fostering a culture of philosophical exploration and dialogue.

Influence of Epics and Puranas

The epics and Puranas played a transformative role in shaping the cultural and moral fabric of Sanatan Dharma. The Ramayana and Mahabharata, two of the most revered epics, narrate timeless stories of virtue, duty, and devotion, offering ethical guidance and spiritual inspiration. The Bhagavad Gita, a part of the Mahabharata, stands out as a philosophical treatise, addressing fundamental questions about life, duty, and the path to liberation. The Puranas, with their rich mythological narratives, provided a bridge between abstract philosophical concepts and popular devotion. They introduced stories of gods, goddesses, and cosmic cycles, making the profound teachings of Sanatan Dharma accessible to all sections of society. Together, these texts contributed to the cultural resilience and adaptability of Sanatan Dharma, ensuring its relevance across generations. By seamlessly integrating spiritual, philosophical, and cultural dimensions, Sanatan Dharma has remained a living tradition, continuously adapting to the needs of society while preserving its eternal essence.

Influence of Sanatan Dharma on Social Structure

Sanatan Dharma has profoundly shaped the social structure of Indian society, embedding its philosophical and ethical principles into the framework of communal living. The varna system, as articulated in ancient texts, categorized society into four primary classes-Brahmins (priests and scholars), Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), Vaishyas (merchants and agriculturists), and Shudras (laborers and service providers). This stratification was intended to allocate roles and responsibilities based on individual nature (guna) and deeds (karma), aiming to uphold dharma (cosmic order) and ensure societal harmony.

However, over time, this idealized system evolved into a rigid caste hierarchy, which often led to social inequalities and exclusion. Sanatan Dharma's influence extended beyond stratification to encompass moral values, interpersonal relationships, and community responsibilities. Practices such as seva (selfless service), dana (charity), and ahimsa (non-violence) were

promoted, emphasizing the importance of compassion and collective well-being. Joint family systems, prevalent in traditional Indian society, reflected the dharmic emphasis on interdependence and mutual support within social units.

Reform movements within Sanatan Dharma, led by sages like Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi, challenged caste-based discrimination and advocated for an inclusive interpretation of dharma, grounded in equality and justice. The principles of Sanatan Dharma have also influenced modern social reforms, inspiring efforts to uplift marginalized communities and promote gender equality. Today, the evolving social structure reflects a dynamic interplay between ancient wisdom and contemporary values, demonstrating the enduring relevance of Sanatan Dharma in fostering a more equitable and harmonious society. By embedding ethical principles into the fabric of social organization, Sanatan Dharma has not only shaped historical norms but continues to inspire contemporary efforts to build a just and inclusive society.

Evolution of Social Structures in Contemporary Society

The social structure influenced by Sanatan Dharma has undergone significant transformations in modern society, shaped by socio-political reforms, globalization, and evolving cultural dynamics. While the traditional varna system once defined societal roles and responsibilities, modern society has moved toward a more fluid and egalitarian framework, challenging rigid hierarchies and promoting inclusivity.

The caste system, historically rooted in Sanatan Dharma, has seen substantial reform due to legal interventions, social movements, and increased awareness. The Indian Constitution abolished "untouchability" and introduced affirmative action policies, ensuring representation and opportunities for historically marginalized communities. These measures reflect a modern interpretation of dharma that prioritizes equality and justice over hereditary privilege.

Urbanization and economic shifts have further transformed social dynamics. The rise of nuclear families, migration for education and employment, and exposure to diverse cultural influences have redefined traditional family structures and community interactions. Joint families, once

central to Hindu society, are now less common, giving way to individualized living arrangements that reflect changing priorities and lifestyles.

Sanatan Dharma's values continue to adapt in contemporary contexts. Practices such as seva (selfless service) have found resonance in modern philanthropy and community service initiatives. Gender roles, traditionally influenced by dharmic interpretations, are evolving, with increasing emphasis on gender equality and women's empowerment. Education, technological advancement, and global exposure have also expanded opportunities, allowing individuals to transcend traditional societal boundaries.

Despite these changes, many cultural and spiritual aspects of Sanatan Dharma remain integral to modern life. Festivals, rituals, and ethical principles continue to provide a sense of identity and continuity. This balance between tradition and modernity demonstrates the adaptability of Sanatan Dharma in responding to the challenges and opportunities of contemporary society. In conclusion, while the influence of Sanatan Dharma on social structure persists, it has evolved to align with modern ideals of equality, individual freedom, and social justice, ensuring its relevance in an increasingly interconnected and dynamic world.

In the present study, which focuses on the influence of Sanatan Dharma on the social structure with special reference to Ranchi and Deoghar districts, the review of literature holds particular importance. Foundational texts of Sanatan Dharma, such as the Vedas, Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, and Manusmriti, provide profound insights into the philosophical, ethical, and sociological principles that underpin its teachings. These texts, revered for their spiritual and societal guidance, offer frameworks for understanding the interplay between religion and social norms. The Bhagavad Gita, with its emphasis on dharma (duty), karma (action), and moksha (liberation), highlights principles that deeply influence individual roles and societal structures. Similarly, the Vedas and Upanishads contribute to understanding the foundational values of Sanatan Dharma, such as varna (social order) and ashrama (life stages), and their implications for societal organization. By engaging with these ancient texts alongside contemporary empirical and textual studies, this review aims to uncover the intricate ways in which

Sanatan Dharma has shaped and continues to influence the social fabric of the selected regions. It also bridges the gap between ancient wisdom and modern sociological analysis, offering a holistic perspective on its enduring relevance. This comprehensive exploration is pivotal for situating the current research within a robust intellectual tradition and ensuring its contribution to the academic discourse.

The following sections outline some of the key concepts and descriptions.

Srila Prabhupad (1972), As per the author, the concept of varṇasrama-dharma is a profound social and spiritual framework designed to ensure harmony and progress within human society. Contrary to common misconceptions, this institution does not divide individuals based on birth but rather on their qualifications, character, and contributions to society. The divisions serve to align individuals with their innate abilities and responsibilities, thereby fostering a balanced and peaceful coexistence. The ultimate goal of this system is not merely societal organization but the spiritual upliftment of individuals, enabling them to transcend material attachments and progress toward liberation from the cycle of birth and death. The author elaborates that the qualities outlined in this system are transcendental in nature, offering a pathway for individuals to deepen their spiritual understanding. The sannyasi is considered the spiritual head of all societal orders, including the brahmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaisyas, and sudras. This elevated position signifies the sannyasi's complete detachment from material possessions and unwavering dedication to spiritual realization. Fearlessness, as the author asserts, is the foremost qualification for a sannyasi. Renouncing all material ties and worldly assurances, the sannyasi must depend entirely on the mercy and guidance of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This state of absolute reliance on divine providence requires immense courage and faith.

Swami Mukundananda (2013), As per the author, the social structure described in the text is rooted in the principles of varnashrama-dharma, a scientific and harmonious system designed to align human duties with inherent

qualities and natural dispositions. Chapter 18, Verse 41" of Bhagwad Gita, The Sanskrit verse:

ब्राह्मणक्षत्रियविशां शूद्राणां च परन्तप ।
कर्माणि प्रविभक्तानि स्वभावप्रभवैर्गुणैः ॥41॥

translates as:

"O destroyer of enemies, the duties of the brahmanas, kṣatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras are distributed according to their qualities, born of their inherent nature, and not based on their birth."

Here, the text emphasizes that the natural qualities and tendencies of individuals shape their roles and responsibilities within society. This system, known as varnashrama-dharma, was designed to foster balance and unity by allowing individuals to perform duties suited to their unique characteristics. The varnashrama framework consisted of four stages of life (asramas) brahmacharya (student life), grihastha (householder life), vanaprastha (retirement and detachment), and sannyasa (renunciation) and four professional classes (varṇas) brahmana's (priests and scholars), kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), Vaisyas (traders and agriculturists), and Sudras (workers and service providers). These divisions aimed at maintaining societal harmony and facilitating spiritual progress, with no hierarchy of superiority or inferiority among them.

B. R. Ambedkar (2025), Author offers a profound analysis of the social, religious, and political upheavals that defined ancient Indian history. Author delves deep into the ideological contest between Buddhism and Brahmanism, tracing the rise and fall of revolutionary ideals that sought to transform the societal fabric of India. Author frames Buddhism as a force of egalitarian change, a philosophy that opposed the rigid caste hierarchy entrenched in Brahmanism. By advocating for equality, rational thought, and universal compassion, Buddhism presented a stark contrast to the stratified social order upheld by the varna system. According to Ambedkar, this revolutionary spirit not only empowered marginalized communities but also

sowed the seeds of social reform, creating a counter-narrative to Brahmanical orthodoxy. The book meticulously examines the subsequent counter-revolution spearheaded by Brahmanism, which sought to reclaim its dominance. Ambedkar argues that the counter-revolution was strategic, relying on religious, political, and cultural mechanisms to suppress the revolutionary ideals of Buddhism. The eventual decline of Buddhism in India, he suggests, was not merely the result of external invasions but a systematic erasure driven by the resurgence of Brahmanism. Ambedkar's critical perspective brings to light the complexities of historical conflicts that continue to shape contemporary Indian society. His insights challenge readers to reflect on the enduring legacy of caste, social inequality, and the suppression of dissenting ideologies.

Shiva Acharya (2005), Author provides a compelling examination of the foundational aspects of ancient Indian society as reflected in Vedic texts. The book investigates the genesis and evolution of the concepts of Rastra (nation) and Rastrabhakti (patriotism), offering a nuanced understanding of how these ideas shaped the cultural ethos of ancient India. Acharya argues that the Vedic understanding of nationhood was deeply rooted in cultural and spiritual dimensions rather than political constructs. Unlike the modern concept of a nation-state, the Vedic notion of Rastra emphasized shared values, traditions, and a collective sense of belonging. This cultural framework fostered unity and resilience, enabling ancient Indian society to thrive amid diverse challenges. The author highlights the social structures and practices reflected in Vedic literature, emphasizing their role in cultivating a sense of patriotism. According to Acharya, Rastrabhakti in Vedic times was not merely an attachment to geographical boundaries but a dedication to preserving and promoting the ethical, spiritual, and cultural ideals of the community. This cultural nationalism, based on shared moral and philosophical principles, served as a binding force, transcending political divisions and external threats.

Manoj Singh (2021), Author offers a profound exploration of one of humanity's most ancient and enduring spiritual traditions. Against the backdrop of a world grappling with unprecedented challenges, this book serves as both a reflection on timeless wisdom and a roadmap for navigating modern

complexities. Rooted in the principles of Sanatan Dharma, the book delves into the Vedic way of life, which emphasizes harmony with nature and the cosmos. It explores the philosophy of living in balance, underscoring the interconnectedness of all existence. The work skillfully examines the cultural and spiritual heritage of the Vedic civilization, shedding light on its enduring relevance for contemporary society. The narrative provides a rich exposition of the foundational aspects of Sanatan Dharma, including its rituals, festivals, customs, yoga, and the spiritual depth of the Vedas and mantras. With a clear and engaging style, the book illuminates how these practices embody a holistic approach to life, fostering physical well-being, mental clarity, and spiritual fulfillment.

N K Tawakley (2018), Author presents a thought-provoking examination of humanity's ongoing quest for meaning, purpose, and well-being. In a world where technological advancements have not alleviated the increasing complexities of life, the book posits that the core issue lies in humanity's disconnection from its true essence. Divided into two parts, the book begins by exploring the fundamental question of existence. Part I delves into Self-Realization, Atma Gyan, or the knowledge of the self, guiding readers through an understanding of their place in the universe and the deeper truths of human nature. This exploration seeks to answer the timeless question of who we are and why we are here, offering a profound perspective on the self and its relationship to the universe. Part II transitions into the practical application of this understanding. It provides a detailed formula for living a happy, prosperous, and fulfilled life, rooted in the principles of Sanatan Dharma. The author articulates how embracing this ancient wisdom offers not only personal fulfillment but also a path toward supreme intelligence and Moksha the ultimate liberation.

Swami Prabhavananda (2019), Author offers a profound exploration of India's philosophical and spiritual legacy, tracing the roots of a tradition that intertwines philosophy with religion in a unique and holistic manner. The author examines the rich history of Indian thought, emphasizing how Indian philosophy is not limited to abstract theorizing, but is grounded in direct, immediate perception and experiential knowledge. What sets Indian

philosophy apart from its Western counterparts is its deep connection to spiritual practice. Instead of relying solely on abstract reasoning, Indian philosophical traditions prioritize lived experiences and introspective understanding. This approach fosters a more inclusive and integrated view of life, where metaphysical concepts are deeply intertwined with the pursuit of spiritual realization.

Ramesh Gampat (2020), Author offers a critical analysis of how Hinduism, particularly in the context of the Indian diaspora in Guyana, evolved under the influence of colonialism and Christian missionary activities. The book outlines how, despite a history of resistance to conversion, Hinduism underwent a significant transformation, influenced by external pressures and internal socio-cultural dynamics. The author traces the journey of Hinduism in the Caribbean, particularly Guyana, where Christian missionaries initially succeeded in diminishing the Hindu identity and eroding traditional practices. However, the book highlights the resistance to conversion and the emergence of a distinct form of Hinduism, which the author labels as "Plantation Hinduism." This form of Hinduism, developed under the oppressive conditions of plantation life, was shaped by a need for survival and social cohesion among immigrants.

Sreeramana Aithal, Ramanathan Srinivasan (2024), Author presents an insightful and structured exploration of Hinduism, bringing to light its fundamental principles and timeless wisdom. The book is meticulously organized into 14 chapters, each offering a deep dive into various aspects of Sanathana Dharma, making it a valuable resource for those seeking to understand the philosophy and spiritual practices of Hinduism in the context of modern society. The first chapter serves as a thorough introduction to Sanathana Dharma, laying the groundwork for readers unfamiliar with the core tenets of Hinduism. As the book progresses, it unravels profound concepts such as the nature of Atman and Brahman, which form the foundation of spiritual understanding in Hindu thought. The book delves into the Four Pillars of Sanathana Dharma, providing a comprehensive view of the moral, ethical, and spiritual framework that guides practitioners. The role of sacred texts, such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and other scriptures, is examined in-

depth, highlighting their importance in guiding individuals on their spiritual journey. In chapters focused on time, creation, and the nature of the universe, the book bridges the gap between ancient spiritual wisdom and modern scientific perspectives.

II. Problems to be investigated

The present study aims to undertake an in-depth exploration of the extensive influence of Sanatan Dharma on the evolving social landscape, using a combined approach of textual analysis and fieldwork. A primary problem to investigate is the role of Sanatan Dharma in shaping and reshaping the social structure of contemporary society, especially concerning caste, gender, and class dynamics. Through a thorough examination of ancient scriptures, philosophical texts, historical accounts, and contemporary sociological studies, supported by empirical field data, this research will assess how the values and teachings of Sanatan Dharma have contributed to the reinforcement or transformation of these social categories over time.

Furthermore, the study will investigate how Sanatan Dharma has influenced the evolution of societal norms and values, tracing its impact from ancient civilizations to present-day society. By analyzing literary sources, historical evidence, and fieldwork observations, this research will explore the role of Sanatan Dharma in promoting social cohesion or contributing to social fragmentation within various communities. Through interviews and non-participant observation in Ranchi and Deoghar, the study will validate textual insights with real-world experiences and perspectives.

An additional area of exploration involves the intricate relationship between Sanatan Dharma and modern thought. This study will examine the compatibility and divergence between the philosophical principles of Sanatan Dharma and contemporary paradigms. Special attention will be given to literature discussing ethics, metaphysics, environmental philosophy, and consciousness studies, evaluating how ancient religious wisdom resonates with or challenges contemporary knowledge. Field interactions will further assess how individuals perceive and integrate these philosophical perspectives into their daily lives. By addressing these interconnected issues through a dual approach of literature review and field research, this study aims to

develop a comprehensive understanding of the historical and contemporary role of Sanatan Dharma in influencing social structures. It will provide valuable insights into the evolving interplay between religious traditions, societal transformations, and philosophical thought across diverse communities, particularly within the socio-cultural contexts of Ranchi and Deoghar.

III. Objective of the Investigation and Motivation

1. To analyze the impact of Sanatan Dharm on the social structure of contemporary society.
2. To examine the role of Sanatan Dharm in driving social change from ancient to modern times.
3. To explore the relationship between the principles of Sanatan Dharm and modern belief systems.

IV. Research Hypothesis

1. Sanatan Dharm has significantly influenced the social structure of contemporary society.
2. The principles of Sanatan Dharm have played a key role in driving social change from ancient to modern times.
3. There is a correlation between the philosophical principles of Sanatan Dharm and modern belief systems.

V. Research Design and Methodology

The research design and methodology for the present study are crafted to comprehensively address the influence of Sanatan Dharm on social structures, social change. This multifaceted investigation will employ a combination of scientific methods, empirical study, descriptive research design, and the discourse method to gather and analyze data from various perspectives.

The scientific method will be employed to ensure a systematic, objective, and structured approach to studying the impact of Sanatan Dharm on different aspects of society. The norms of objectivity will have to be followed as the empirical study involves the collection of data based on direct observations,

interviews, surveys, and ethnographic methods to establish a real-world understanding of the phenomenon. The scientific method allows for the formulation of hypotheses that can be tested through observation and experimentation. In this study, empirical data will be collected to investigate the tangible effects of Sanatan Dharm on modern social structures, social change, and tribal communities. This method will enable a detailed analysis of how the philosophies of Sanatan Dharm interact with contemporary societal norms, including social hierarchies, cultural practices, and the influence of religion on modern belief system and technological advancements.

Descriptive research design will be utilized to gather in-depth, qualitative data about the social structure, cultural practices, and belief systems shaped by Sanatan Dharm. This approach will focus on providing a comprehensive and accurate portrayal of the social phenomena under investigation. The descriptive design is essential because it allows the researcher to explore and describe the characteristics of the influence of Sanatan Dharm on society, without necessarily manipulating variables. This method is ideal for understanding the existing social structures, traditions, and changes within the community, as it emphasizes a rich, detailed understanding of the subject matter. The descriptive approach will help document the current state of social practices, the extent of social change from ancient to modern times, and the influence of Sanatan Dharm on tribal societies, contributing to the broader understanding of the topic.

The discourse method will be used to analyze texts, speeches, and religious scriptures to study the underlying ideologies and narratives propagated by Sanatan Dharm. This will involve examining religious texts, philosophical writings, social commentaries, and contemporary discussions to identify how Sanatan Dharm constructs and influences social and cultural norms. The discourse method is particularly suited for this study because it allows for a deeper exploration of the ways in which language and discourse shape societal beliefs, values, and practices. By analyzing both ancient and modern discourses related to Sanatan Dharm, the study will uncover how the religion's principles have evolved over time and how they influence contemporary views on social structure, social change, and beliefs. It will also reveal how

religious discourse intersects with modern societal issues and debates, offering a broader understanding of its role in shaping both traditional and contemporary social systems.

By utilizing a combination of scientific, empirical, descriptive, and discourse methodologies, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which Sanatan Dharm has influenced and continues to shape social structures, beliefs, and practices. The integration of these methodologies will allow for both qualitative and quantitative analyses, offering a holistic approach to understanding the complexities of Sanatan Dharm's role in society.

VI. Sources of Data Collection

The data collection for the present study will be based on both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources will involve gathering firsthand information through surveys, observations, and interviews, while the secondary sources will provide historical context and theoretical understanding of the research topic.

Primary Sources

Sampling and Sample Size

For the present study, 300 respondents will be selected from religious places in the Ranchi and Deoghar districts, with a particular focus on the priests (or Pujaris) of temples. The respondents will be chosen purposefully, as they are key figures who are actively involved in the practice and dissemination of Sanatan Dharm. This specific group is chosen because they possess deep knowledge of the religious traditions, rituals, and beliefs that form the foundation of Sanatan Dharm. The sample size of 300 respondents is selected to ensure a diverse range of opinions and experiences from different religious settings and to provide a broad representation of the influence of Sanatan Dharm across these two districts. A sample of 300 respondents ensures that the data is sufficiently representative and robust, allowing for the identification of common patterns and variations across different religious locations. The priests are central to understanding the impact of Sanatan

Dharm, as they perform rituals, interpret sacred texts, and are influential in shaping the religious and social norms within their communities. Their perspectives will provide key insights into how Sanatan Dharm affects social structures and religious practices.

Observation

For the present study, non-participant observation will be used as the primary method of data collection. Non-participant observation involves the researcher observing the activities and behaviors of the individuals in their natural setting without actively participating in the rituals or interactions. This method will be used during temple rituals, community events, and religious ceremonies. Non-participant observation is ideal for capturing the social dynamics and practices related to Sanatan Dharm as they unfold naturally in their social and religious contexts. By remaining a passive observer, the researcher can ensure that their presence does not influence the behaviors or responses of the participants, allowing for a more authentic understanding of the social structures and rituals in practice. It will also allow the researcher to study interactions, social hierarchies, and the application of religious teachings in real-time.

Interview and Interview Schedule

Interviews will be conducted with the selected respondents (priests and other knowledgeable community members) to gain in-depth insights into the influence of Sanatan Dharm on their personal beliefs, social structures, and daily practices. An interview schedule will be prepared in consultation with the research supervisor, ensuring that it aligns with the objectives of the study and addresses the key research questions. The interview schedule will be designed to elicit detailed, qualitative data regarding the respondents' perspectives on Sanatan Dharm's impact on social structures, cultural practices, and beliefs. The structured format of the interview schedule will ensure that the questions are consistent across all interviews, enabling a comparative analysis of the responses. The interview process will provide a platform for respondents to express their personal experiences and observations, enriching the empirical

data with personal narratives that highlight the lived experiences of individuals within the religious and social context.

Secondary Sources

Secondary sources will complement the primary data by providing context, theoretical frameworks, and historical background relevant to the study.

Books and Scholarly Articles

Books, academic journals, and scholarly articles on Sanatan Dharm, religious practices, and social structures will provide essential insights into the ideological and historical evolution of the religion and its impact on society. These sources will form the theoretical basis for understanding how Sanatan Dharm influences social dynamics, both historically and in the present.

Religious Texts and Scriptures

Key religious texts, such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and other sacred writings associated with Sanatan Dharm, will be analyzed to understand the foundational principles of the religion. These texts will help explain the philosophical and doctrinal teachings that shape social structures, moral values, and rituals within communities.

Government Reports and Surveys

Reports published by government agencies, such as those on social structures, community welfare, and religious practices, will provide empirical data on the socio-economic conditions of the communities being studied. These will offer demographic and cultural context, enriching the primary data collected from the field.

Media Sources

Newspapers, magazines, and other media reports will be consulted to gather contemporary views on the role of Sanatan Dharm in social change, beliefs, and social structures. Media sources will also help track public debates on religion, science, and the role of tradition in modern society.

Historical and Sociological Studies

Existing studies on the history of Sanatan Dharm, its role in social change, and its influence on tribal and non-tribal communities will offer critical background information. These studies will be essential for comparing historical changes in social structures and religious practices across different time periods.

VII. Analysis of Data

The analysis of data for this study will involve a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of how Sanatan Dharm influences social structures, social change, beliefs, and tribal communities. The qualitative data gathered from interviews and non-participant observations will be analyzed through thematic and narrative analysis. Thematic analysis will be used to identify patterns and recurring themes in the responses, such as discussions on caste systems, gender roles, religious rituals, and social hierarchies. Each interview will be carefully coded to group responses according to these themes. For example, responses that focus on caste-based discrimination, the impact of religious practices on social structures, or the intersection of religious beliefs and modern knowledge will be categorized accordingly. Narrative analysis will be employed to capture the personal stories shared by the respondents, providing a deeper understanding of how individuals reconcile traditional religious beliefs with modern influences. These narratives will be particularly valuable for understanding how tribal communities maintain their cultural identity while engaging with contemporary social structures.

In addition to the qualitative analysis, quantitative data such as age, gender, educational background, occupation, and length of religious involvement will be collected to further contextualize the study. These variables will be analyzed to identify demographic patterns that may correlate with the respondents' views on Sanatan Dharm and its influence on social and beliefs. For example, differences in responses based on age may reveal how younger generations view the relevance of Sanatan Dharm in contemporary social contexts, while gender may help explore the role of religious practices

in reinforcing or challenging traditional gender roles. The analysis of these demographic factors will provide a broader view of how Sanatan Dharm influences various segments of the population differently, depending on their social and personal characteristics.

By integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods, the analysis will offer a holistic view of the topic, allowing the researcher to not only explore deep, personal insights into religious practices but also identify broader social trends and demographic patterns. This approach will ensure that the study comprehensively addresses the research objectives, providing nuanced answers to how Sanatan Dharm impacts social structures, changes from ancient to modern times, the intersection of belief and science, and its relevance to tribal communities.

VIII. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to illuminate the profound influence of Sanatan Dharm on the social fabric, belief systems, and cultural practices of contemporary society, particularly within the context of tribal and rural communities. As Sanatan Dharm has historically shaped social structures, rituals, and values in India, this research seeks to explore its enduring impact, especially amidst the rapid changes in modern social dynamics, scientific thought, and the evolving role of religion in society. By investigating how Sanatan Dharm influences social hierarchies, gender roles, family structures, and even beliefs, this study will offer valuable insights into the ways in which ancient religious philosophies continue to mold contemporary practices and perceptions. Furthermore, the research will bridge the gap between traditional tribal communities and modern scientific understandings, shedding light on the intersection of belief and empirical knowledge in the modern age. The study will also significantly contribute to the understanding of how religious traditions influence social change, especially when viewed through the lens of social structure evolution from ancient to modern times. With a focus on tribal communities, this research holds the potential to impact the discourse on indigenous beliefs and practices, offering a nuanced perspective on their resilience and adaptability in a rapidly changing world.

Additionally, by using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, the study will provide empirical data that could inform policy makers, sociologists, anthropologists, and religious scholars in understanding the complexities of religious influences on societal norms. In essence, the study aims to make an important contribution to the broader understanding of how Sanatan Dharm has shaped, and continues to shape, the sociocultural landscape of India, providing a critical lens through which we can examine the intersection of religion, culture, and modernity.

IX. Its relevance to the present day problem and need to the society

The relevance of this study to contemporary issues is profound, as it addresses the evolving relationship between traditional belief systems, such as Sanatan Dharm, and modern societal challenges. In today's fast-paced world, where modernization, scientific advancements, and global influences are reshaping cultural and social landscapes, the study of religious systems like Sanatan Dharm becomes crucial to understanding how these ancient practices and philosophies continue to shape and influence the lives of individuals and communities, particularly in tribal and rural regions. As urbanization and technological progress spread rapidly, there is often a tension between traditional beliefs and modern values, leading to a complex set of societal challenges—ranging from cultural preservation to social integration. This study seeks to explore how Sanatan Dharm plays a pivotal role in maintaining cultural identities, especially in indigenous communities, amid these changes. For tribal communities, in particular, who are at the intersection of modernity and tradition, this research is essential to understanding how their religious beliefs not only shape their social structures but also how they engage with knowledge and social progress. The study highlights how these communities navigate the balancing act between preserving their cultural and spiritual heritage while also adapting to modern influences such as education, health care, and economic opportunities. In this context, the research becomes increasingly relevant as policymakers and development organizations work toward inclusive growth and social equity, particularly in rural and tribal areas. Furthermore, in the face of growing debates on scientific progress vs. traditional beliefs, this study can contribute to a more balanced understanding

of how religious beliefs and scientific perspectives can coexist, influencing social change in diverse and constructive ways. It will also shed light on how Sanatan Dharm's teachings impact social practices like gender roles, caste dynamics, and social hierarchy, addressing the contemporary need for social reform, inclusivity, and equality. By engaging with these social challenges through a holistic, empirical framework, the study holds significant potential to inform societal discourse, offering solutions that respect both traditional wisdom and the advancement of knowledge. In doing so, it can directly contribute to the enhancement of social cohesion, intergenerational dialogue, and the empowerment of marginalized communities in modern India, particularly those who continue to be guided by ancient religious principles. Thus, the relevance of this study lies not only in preserving cultural heritage but also in addressing contemporary social issues, making it a crucial endeavor for the betterment of society.

X. Contribution to the existing knowledge

Present study makes a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge by offering a comprehensive exploration of how Sanatan Dharm continues to influence contemporary social structures, beliefs, and the evolving dynamics within tribal communities. While much has been written about the broader impact of religion on society, the specific focus on Sanatan Dharm's role in shaping modern social hierarchies, gender roles, and scientific thought within the context of indigenous communities remains underexplored. This research fills this gap by addressing the intersection between ancient religious practices and modern societal changes, providing new insights into how traditional beliefs persist and evolve in the face of scientific advancements and globalization. In particular, the examination of how tribal communities navigate these dual influences will offer valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities they face in maintaining their cultural identity while engaging with the broader social fabric of contemporary India. Through this, the research will offer new perspectives on cultural preservation in an age of rapid urbanization and technological innovation. The study also deepens our understanding of tribal society by emphasizing the role of religion as a key factor in the socio-cultural life of these communities. In doing so, it broadens

the scope of sociological and anthropological research into the complexities of tribal life, particularly in the context of religious syncretism and identity construction. The unique methodological approach of combining empirical research with textual analysis will add methodological richness to the existing literature, offering a more holistic view of how religious traditions shape both individual and collective identities. By exploring how Sanatan Dharm intersects with knowledge, this study will also contribute to the growing body of research on the relationship between religion and science, particularly in the Indian context. It will challenge binary understandings of faith versus reason, highlighting the ways in which ancient beliefs and modern science can coexist and complement each other in shaping social realities. Ultimately, the findings from this research will be invaluable to policymakers, sociologists, anthropologists, and religious scholars by providing them with a nuanced understanding of the continuity and change within religious and social systems. It will also offer actionable insights for promoting social cohesion, cultural diversity, and inclusive development, especially for marginalized and indigenous populations. Thus, this study will significantly contribute to the fields of religious studies, sociology, and anthropology, enriching the existing discourse on the role of religion in social structure and change.

XI. Future Work

Future research could expand on this study by exploring other regions where Sanatan Dharm influences social structures and tribal communities, offering comparative insights. Longitudinal studies tracking changes over time in tribal societies could provide a deeper understanding of how religious practices evolve with modernity. Research into the reconciliation of traditional knowledge and modern science in tribal communities, particularly in health and environmental sustainability, could provide valuable insights. Additionally, future studies could focus on gender and caste within religious structures, further investigating the impact of Sanatan Dharm on the empowerment of marginalized groups. Policy-focused research could examine how religious and cultural elements are integrated into development programs, fostering inclusive growth. The role of technology and social media in reshaping

religious practices among younger generations is another promising area for investigation. Overall, future work could deepen the understanding of the intersection between religion, social change, and advancement, contributing to more inclusive and contextual development strategies in India.

XII. Tentative Chapterization

Chapter I: Introduction

Chapter II: Review of Literature

Chapter III: Area of Study and Methodology

Chapter IV: Influence of Sanatan Dharm on Social Structure

Chapter V: Social Change from Ancient to Modern: The Role of Religion

Chapter VI: Religion and Modern belief system : Exploring the Relationship

Chapter VII: Conclusion, Findings, Discussions, and Analysis

References:-

- Prabhupad Srila (1972), Bhagwad Gita, As it is, Collier Macmillan Publishers, London
- Mukundananda Swami (2013), Bhagavad Gita: The Song of God, Jagadguru Kripaluji Yog (JKYog), New Delhi
- Singh Manoj (2021), Sanatan Dharma: Vaidik gateway to the next century, Bloomsbury Publishing, U.K.
- Ambedkar B. R. (2025), Revolution And Counter-Revolution In Ancient India, Prabhat Prakashan, New Delhi
- Acharya Shiva (2005), Nation, nationalism and social structure in ancient India: a survey through Vedic literature, Decent Books, New Delhi
- Tawakley N K (2018), Understanding Sanatan Dharma: Revealing the Divine Science of Hindu Religion, Notion Press, Chennai
- Prabhavananda Swami (2019), The Spiritual Heritage of India, Taylor & Francis, U.K.
- Gampat Ramesh (2020), Sanatana Dharma and Plantation Hinduism (Second Edition Volume 1) Explorations and Reflections of an Indian Guyanese Hindu, Xlibris Publisher, U.S.

- Aithal, Sreeramana Srinivasan Ramanathan (2024), Sanathana Dharma: The Eternal Quest for Truth, Srinivas Publication, Mangalore
- Sardesai V.S. (2008), Governance under Sanatana Dharma, Readworthy Publications, New Delhi
- Thakur Devendra (2016), Research Methodology in Social Sciences, Deep & Deep Publications, New Delhi
- Young Pauline V. (1984), Scientific Social Surveys And Research, Prentice Hall Of India, U.S.
- Dunn Kevin C., Neumann Iver B. (2016), Undertaking Discourse Analysis for Social Research, University of Michigan Press, U.S.